

What Does the Natural Path Sanctuary Mean to Me?

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HONORABLE MENTION

The plot is Block 411/Lot H and I chose it at my one and only visit to the Farley Center in late May of 2018. Shedd Farley looks exactly as one would expect from his name, strong, weather beaten and wise. As Shedd and I rode around the PATH in his ATV, I noticed some open graves close to the bottom of the hill and near the entrance. He explained patiently that if someone dies in the middle of winter, they would be interred in the pre-dug graves because they couldn't dig in the frozen ground during a Wisconsin winter. I sure hope I die in a warm month because I took great pains to choose a beautiful spot about two thirds the way up the big hill and very close to the fence line, very private, level and on high ground. See, I have an irrational fear of having my grave flooded and having my body floating down the middle of some street like the underground cemeteries in New Orleans used to do.

As a retired teacher from the Waterloo (Wisconsin) School system, I have no family or friends near Verona and I was completely unaware of The Farley Center until I decided it was time to pre-arrange my final resting place. Ever since I was a questioning boy of about 16 back in the north east corner of Maryland on the east coast, my questions and concerns regarding my footprint on earth have been both serious and concerning to me. I realized I never wanted to bring children into this world of uncertainty, not just because of the plagues and pestilence stuff, but also in large part to my concerns of over-population. I thought long and hard about the absurdity of embalming fluid trying to preserve a dead body that should be decaying and doing the old ashes to ashes and dust to dust routine. Driving a car that gets 40 miles per gallon if I'm hypermiling doesn't seem to offset all the old smokey cars and bikes I used to own in my underprivileged youth. Recycling seems good for the environment until you hear news reports that say recycling costs more than it is worth. Instead of separating the confusing plastics, many recyclers used to just bundle it up and shipped it to China or some third world nation that dumped it in the ocean. I find it infuriating that Republican lawmakers pander to an under educated base by denying climate science. I guess what I'm trying to say is that despite the fact that we, as mankind, continue to take this planet for granted, I as an individual can live my truth and get buried in a green cemetery without formaldehyde and headstones.

So why does the **Natural Path Sanctuary** mean so much to me? NPR is that special place that provides space in the ground in perpetuity for people like me. The fact that no toxic chemicals or metals will ever be allowed along with no headstones ensures that nature will cover up any scarred earth rather quickly and my resting place will always be a place of peace and serenity surrounded by the natural flora and fauna of the upper Midwest long after my ashes and dust

have helped nourish the earth at Block 411/Lot H. How does one put a value on a perpetual peace where even in death nothing will break my concentration? The finality of death is a large consideration, maybe not while I'm dead, but certainly before I'm dead it's important. The more I consider my final resting place, the more it seems well considered and exactly right for me.

So, that fateful day when I googled "green cemetery – Wisconsin" and Verona was the only place remotely drivable, I started saving my disposable income to pre-arrange a grave site. Once that was done I learned a funeral home was going to be necessary unless I was going to ask my wife to throw me out in the back yard and wash my body with a garden hose, wrap my fat ass in a shroud or sheet, then somehow wrestle me into her car and drive me to NPR. So I interviewed several funeral homes and discussed no embalming, cleaning, refrigeration and transportation from hospital or home to NPR and settled on one familiar with green cemetery procedures. I then went about having a body bag made special for me with unbleached denim and thread and no zipper or metal with a cotton rope closure method (with Mr. Farley's approval of course). I'm just not sure how well a shroud/bed sheet is going to cover my body through all the transportation and transfers.

I am all set to die, and there is a certain peace and contentment that comes with that knowledge. Thank you to Shedd Farley and NPR for making all that possible for me.